

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT
U.S. Application No. To be assigned
Divisional of 09/042,642

Attorney Docket No. Q64221

Pages ¹~~2~~ and ²~~3~~, please delete the paragraph that bridges these two pages and replace it with the following:

B² However, it is difficult to greatly change the angle of the groove wall surfaces due to problems such as removing the tire from a mold at the time of vulcanization or the like. Further, as wear progresses, the width of the groove has a distribution which differs greatly than that at the time the tire was new, which is not preferable from the standpoint of performance nor from the standpoint of external appearance.

Page 5, please delete the first full paragraph and replace it as follows:

B³ The term "ground-contact-configuration" as used herein is defined as follows. In accordance with the 1996 JATMA Year Book ("JATMA" stands for the "Japan Automobile Tire Manufacturers' Association, Inc."), a tire is rim-assembled to a standard rim at an applied size, and the tire is filled with air pressure corresponding to the maximum load capacity at the applied size/ply rating in accordance with the 1996 JATMA Year Book. The ground-contact configuration is measured when there is a load of 80% of the maximum load capacity at the applied size/ply rating in accordance with the 1996 JATMA Year Book (where there is both description of a single tire and plural tires, the description of the single tire is applicable).

Pages 5 and 6, please delete the paragraph that bridges these two pages and replace it as follows:

B⁴ In the pneumatic tire of the first aspect of the present invention, a sipe which is substantially parallel to the contour line at the trailing edge of the ground-contact configuration is provided in a region at the trailing edge of each block at the shoulder side. Therefore, from the time of step-in to the time of kick-out of a block, the effect of the shearing strain transmitted to the trailing edge from the preceding trailing edge region is mitigated, the movement of the trailing edge with respect to the road surface is suppressed, and wear at the trailing edge (the toe side), i.e., heel-and-toe wear, is suppressed.

Page 8, please delete the third full paragraph and replace it as follows:

As illustrated in Fig. 1, four circumferential direction main grooves 14, which extend along the circumferential direction of the tire (the direction of arrow R and the direction opposite to the direction of arrow R, the direction of arrow R representing the primary direction of rotation of the tire), are formed in a tread 12 of a pneumatic tire 10 of the present first embodiment. At the tire transverse direction (the direction of arrow W) outer sides of the circumferential direction main grooves 14 which are formed at the tire transverse direction sides, a plurality of blocks 18, which are defined by these circumferential direction main grooves 14 and a plurality of transverse direction grooves 16 extending along the tire transverse direction, are disposed along the circumferential direction of the tire.

Pages 9 and 10, , please delete the paragraph that bridges these two pages and replace it as follows:

As illustrated in Fig. 2, envisaging the time when the pneumatic tire 10 rotates in the direction of the arrow R on a road surface 34, for example, there is a block 18A at which only the leading edge end portion thereof contacts the road surface 34, blocks 18B-18E which entirely contact the road surface 34, and a block 18F which begins to move apart from the road surface 34 (i.e., only the trailing edge side end portion thereof contacts the road surface 34).

Pages 10 and 11, please delete the paragraph that bridges these two pages and replace it as follows:

The sipes 32, 36 of the present first embodiment are linear, and the end portions thereof are not connected to the circumferential direction main grooves 14. However, the present invention is not limited to the same configuration. As illustrated in Fig. 3, end portions of the sipes 32, 26 may be connected to the circumferential direction main grooves 14. As illustrated in Fig. 4, portions of the sipes 32, 36 may be curved. Further, the entire sipes 32, 26 may be curved provided that they are substantially parallel to the contour line of the ground-contact configuration 30.

Page 12, please delete the first full paragraph and replace it with the following:

B8 Shoulder blocks 42, defined by the inclined grooves 38 and the circumferential direction main grooves 14, are disposed along the tire circumferential direction at both shoulder portion sides (both tire transverse direction sides) of the tread 12. Second blocks 44, which are similarly defined by the circumferential direction main grooves 14 and the inclined grooves 38, are disposed between the shoulder blocks 42 and the rib 40 along the circumferential direction of the tire.

Page 15, please delete the first full paragraph and replace it as follows:

B9 In the evaluation of the comparison of the tires, the difference in the amount of wear between the trailing edge and the leading edge of the block at the shoulder side was expressed as an index with the Conventional Example Tire being 100. Higher values indicate smaller wear differences which is better. The results are shown in following Tables 1 and 2.

Page 16, please delete the first full paragraph and replace it as follows:

B10 It will be understood from the experimental results listed in Table 1, the Example Tire 1 to which the present invention is applied exhibits a great reduction in the amount of the step due to wear and the noise level as compared with Conventional Example Tire 1 and the Comparative Example Tire.

Pages 16 and 17, please delete the paragraph that bridges these two pages and replace it as follows:

B11 It will be understood from Table 2, the Example Tires 2 and 3 to which the present invention is applied exhibit greatly reduced amounts of steps due to wear and noise levels as compared to Conventional Example Tire 2. Further, Example Tire 3, which was provided with sipes at the leading edge regions of the blocks as well, results in an even greater decrease in the noise level than Example Tire 2.